

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk today urged all Chicago-area Holocaust survivors and family to use a new Web site created by the International Tracing Service (ITS) designed to link survivors to millions of recently opened Nazi archives in Bad Arolsen, Germany.

After months of pressure from Capitol Hill, the ITS Holocaust archives are open to the world. Congressman Kirk's staff co-led an official delegation to the archives when the final ratification occurred.

"The opening of Bad Arolsen will provide many survivors and family members the closure they were denied for more than 60 years," said Congressman Kirk, a past co-chair of the House Taskforce on Anti-Semitism. "At a time when the President of Iran sponsors official Holocaust denial conferences and genocide continues in Sudan, the opening of these archives should renew the pledge we took in 1945: Never again."

Congressman Kirk met today with ITS Director Reto Meister and Dr. Paul Shapiro, the Director of the Holocaust Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, to discuss the next steps in linking survivors to the archive.

Survivors are encouraged to submit online requests at <http://www.its-arolsen.org/>. ITS committed to respond to all new requests within eight weeks. Questions can be directed to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the U.S. recipient of Bad Arolsen's digital archives, by calling 1-866-912-4835.

In May 2006, the 11 members of the International Commission of the ITS – the governing board of the archives – voted to amend its 1955 treaty to allow open access to the archives and transfer digital copies of the records to members of the Commission.

Unfortunately, after passing the amendment, several countries dragged their feet in ratifying the treaty through their respective parliaments.

In February, Congressman Kirk spearheaded a letter-writing campaign with Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL), urging all Commission members to ratify the treaty amendments. In March, Hastings and Kirk introduced H.Res. 240, a bipartisan resolution calling on Commission members to ratify the amendments immediately. The resolution passed unanimously in the House.

Last month, Hastings and Kirk joined again to introduce a bipartisan resolution congratulating members of the Commission for ratifying the amendments and praising the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum for its strong leadership.

Photos from the archive are available upon request.